



# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Prepared by*

### **The Montgomery County Gang Prevention Task Force**

*Submitted to*

### **County Executive Douglas M. Duncan Montgomery County, Maryland**

*December 2004*

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Task Force Co-Chairs:

**Carolyn W. Colvin**

*Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Director*

**Tom Manger**

*Montgomery County Chief of Police*

#### **Prevention Subcommittee**

**Sharon Friedman & Mindi Goodpaster, Co-Chairs**

*Montgomery County Mental Health Association*

#### **Intervention Subcommittee**

**Dr. Frieda Lacey, Chair**

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**Co-Chairs**

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**Mayda Colon Tsaknis**

*Maryland Hispanic Bar Association*



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#### **I. NEED FOR ACTION**

In recent months, regional law enforcement officials have said that the presence of violent, well-structured gangs is steadily increasing across the Washington area. Gangs are recruiting young members in the District of Columbia and in surrounding suburban communities. Law enforcement research shows that there are at least 3,600 gang members in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia and there are nine major active gangs and more than 100 additional crews and cliques regionwide. (*Washington Post*, September 2003)

The presence and growth of gang activity is a major concern to local communities and particularly to immigrant neighborhoods. Incidents of local gang activity have been reported in the media with respect to regional, national and international gangs.

The Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force focused on obtaining an accurate assessment of the numbers of gangs and gang members operating in the region. Information from the Montgomery County Police Department and the State's Attorney Gang Unit indicates that:

- The mobility of gangs and gang members makes it very difficult to compile a hard count of the number of gangs and/or gang members in the region. Many neighborhood crews or gangs form and disband on a frequent basis. In addition, gangs that are encountered and documented in one jurisdiction may also be encountered and documented in another jurisdiction.
- Gang activity has been documented in all of the Montgomery County police districts. The majority of documented gang activity occurs in specific areas of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> police districts. The greater Langley Park/Takoma Park/Long Branch area and Lincoln Park community are also of particular concern.
- Seventy different gangs have been identified at one time or another over the last five years. Over that time period, 2,400 names were entered into a police data base. Current estimates indicate that there are 20 to 22 active gangs with approximately 540 to 560 active members and associates. While new gangs may periodically come and go, the 20 to 22 gangs have engaged in and continue to participate in some level of sustained criminal activity in Montgomery County.

## **II. CHARGE TO THE JOINT COUNTY GANG PREVENTION TASK FORCE**

In February 2004, Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan and Prince George's County Executive Jack M. Johnson established a Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force (Joint County Task Force) to facilitate the coordination of efforts related to gang activity and gang violence. The Joint County Task Force included representatives of public and private groups engaged in gang prevention services as well as faith-based agencies, leaders from the various racial and ethnic communities and other nonprofit, grassroots organizations from the community. The Joint County Task Force was charged with the following:

- Assess the nature and scope of gang activity in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.
- Identify primary geographic areas and populations which require concentrated gang prevention efforts.
- Identify existing community resources available to respond to the problem of gang activity.
- Identify opportunities for coordinated intercounty and interdepartmental planning to implement gang prevention strategies.
- Conduct municipal/community town hall meetings to obtain input from community residents.

- Identify key public and private and community partnerships essential for implementation of gang prevention initiatives in schools and communities.
- Recommend cultural and linguistic competency levels needed to implement gang prevention strategies responsive to County youth and their families.
- Identify policies, programs and resources needed to implement gang prevention strategies in Montgomery County and Prince George's County.
- Prepare and submit an accountability structure for periodic review of recommendations submitted by the County Gang Prevention Task Force.

Recommendations should lead to specific outcomes including: increased safety and well-being of youth and families in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; increased awareness and capacity of families and communities to respond to factors that contribute to gang activity; and reduction of gang recruitment, gang participation and gang violence in local communities.

Co-Chairs of the Joint County Task Force were: Prince George's County Police Chief, Melvin High; Montgomery County Police Chief, Tom Manger; Prince George's County Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Human Services, James Dula; and Montgomery County Health and Human Services Director, Carolyn Colvin.

Each county established three subcommittees: Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression. The subcommittees met regularly during the seven months to review and analyze data and to formulate recommendations in their particular areas. Each county held a series of municipal and town hall meetings to solicit input from community members who have experienced firsthand the problems of gang activity and gang violence. Individuals testifying at these public forums included parents, youth, community leaders, educators and former and current gang members. Each county established a Web site devoted to publicizing the activities of the Joint County Task Force. Concerned individuals could contact the Task Force with suggestions, concerns and comments by e-mail.

The Joint County Task Force met on a monthly basis to review the direction and progress of the county task forces, to review the subcommittee work and to develop a final report and recommendations.

**The Joint County Task Force endorsed three guiding principles that serve as a foundation for the recommendations in the Joint County Report:**

- By addressing risk factors for gang involvement, a community can also address other issues faced by youth, young adults and their families, such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, truancy and drop-out rates, unemployment, bullying and mental health problems.

- All programs that address prevention, suppression and intervention, whether existing or new to the community, must be culturally sensitive and must reflect the diversity of the community in which they operate.
- All new programs that address prevention, intervention and suppression must be evidence-based, with measurable outcomes, and must have evaluation programs built in to monitor their effectiveness.

The Joint County Task Force issued a separate report with its joint recommendations. These recommendations are attached to this report (see Appendix). Not all the joint recommendations are repeated in the separate Montgomery County Task Force recommendations which are provided in the next section. For example, the Joint County Task Force is recommending a bi-county coordinated public awareness campaign, expansion of the School Resource Officer/Educational Facilities Officer programs and the establishment of an anonymous tip-line in each county for reporting suspected gang activity, graffiti or other suspicious activities.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY GANG PREVENTION TASK FORCE**

As noted in the previous section, each County met separately in county-based Prevention, Intervention and Suppression subcommittees. The subcommittee members brought to the table a wealth of knowledge, perspective, creativity and recommendations.

The subcommittees relied upon national models and research literature to frame their discussions and develop their recommendations. In particular, the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention's Comprehensive Gang Model (OJJDP 2002) was extremely useful. In addition, the input received from the municipal/town hall meetings was considered. Reports prepared by the Montgomery County Prevention, Intervention and Suppression Subcommittees are available in the Montgomery County Gang Prevention Task Force Final Report and Recommendations in the Appendix.

The subcommittees joined together as the Montgomery County Gang Prevention Task Force, which strongly endorses the Joint Task Force Guiding Principles listed on page 4 of this Executive Summary. We must comprehensively address risk factors that contribute to gang involvement, ensure that programs are culturally competent and insist that programs follow proven best practices if we are to halt the increasing presence of gangs in Montgomery County. The Montgomery County Task Force strongly supports the Joint County Task Force recommendation that aims to develop a comprehensive public policy agenda for future county, state and federal legislative sessions, including the development of legislative priorities and funding sources to address the issues of gang activity and gang violence.

To achieve the vision of a community where gangs are not welcome, wanted or needed by our youth, the Montgomery County Gang Prevention Task Force members urge County Executive Duncan to undertake a comprehensive program that will coordinate, inform, educate, prevent and protect county neighborhoods. Below are specific recommendations related to each of these components.

#### **A. COORDINATE**

The need for better coordination of gang prevention strategies in Montgomery County as well as regionally was identified by each of the subcommittees as a critical need. To achieve this, the County Executive should:

- (1) Establish a Steering Committee with representation from senior-level public and private decision-makers as well as community leaders to direct the planning and monitor the progress of the County's gang prevention efforts.** This Steering Committee should be led by the Montgomery County Chief of Police, the Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools and the Director of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. The Steering Committee should be supported by a Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator. The coordinator position could be located in an Executive branch department or private agency. The coordinator must have expertise in violence prevention and community networks.
- (2) The Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator should also be charged with coordinating the research and writing that must be done in order to secure additional public and private resources.** Services to at-risk youth have undergone severe reductions because of fiscal constraints at the State and local levels. In order to sustain current efforts and enhance the capacity to prevent gang involvement and other delinquent behaviors, it is necessary to strengthen the funding foundation for the entire continuum of services.
- (3) Designate an organization or agency to oversee and coordinate all County activities related to the prevention, intervention and suppression of youth violence. This organization would respond to direction from the Steering Committee.** Responsibilities of this organization would include receiving and analyzing gang activity data collected by other agencies, monitoring and reporting on gang and youth violence activity in the County. This organization would assist the Steering Committee in the development and oversight of a comprehensive plan to address the three areas of the continuum model. It would also facilitate the creation of a network of community stakeholders with a common goal of strengthening community partnerships. This alliance should include a multicultural, interfaith referral network of religious leaders and religious organizations that work with youth.

- (4) **To assist with planning, implementation and evaluation, designate a Prevention Services Coordinator as needed in schools and other public and private organizations to assess and address prevention needs.**

## **B. INFORM**

We cannot inform the community without good information that uses common terms and definitions. Many agencies and groups currently hold many types of information. Efforts such as the Data Collaborative, led by the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children Youth and Families, are working to coordinate “big-picture data” about the overall condition of our children and families. However, a greater focus is needed on trends in gang participation and youth violence.

- (1) **Identify the types of data to be collected and the policies and protocols around data collection and sharing that will: (1) measure progress in decreasing gang participation and youth violence; (2) ensure communication for improved school and public safety; and (3) connect identified youth and their families with needed services.** As much as possible, data should be standardized across departmental boundaries with agreed-upon definitions and consistent processes for collection, reporting and dissemination. These data can be both qualitative and quantitative. Consideration of confidentiality laws and the levels of access to certain kinds of data must be included in the policies and protocols.
- (2) **Create a resource directory with a Web presence that communicates information on a regular basis and conveys a positive youth image.** This information (new and existing) can include links to directories of proven prevention programs and strategies focused on youth, a community events calendar, a Speakers Bureau and training and educational opportunities.

## **C. EDUCATE**

- (1) **Provide comprehensive, countywide awareness training to community members, including youth, parents and agency professionals who work with youth, about risk factors, how to deter gang involvement, the warning signs of gang involvement and strategies for working with gang-involved and at-risk youth.** It is important to send a consistent message about prevention and intervention strategies, gang awareness and at-risk youth behaviors to schools, parents and community service providers so they can respond appropriately when issues arise.
- (2) **Focus gang prevention education efforts for vulnerable youth populations and their families through various methods such as providing information to those using the International Student Admissions Office of Montgomery**

**County Public Schools, the Gilchrist Center and the ESOL program.** Work with the faith community to reach vulnerable families.

- (3) **Continue to use focus groups and surveys to gain insights and information from youth in order to better target education efforts**

#### **D. PREVENT**

Prevention requires good planning, proven methods and multi-year sustained commitments. Just as MCPS has shown that a multi-year commitment to lower class size is improving educational outcomes, proven prevention strategies and programs need to remain in place if we are to see results.

- (1) **Expand and sustain after-school programs that are proven effective during the critical hours of 2-6 p.m. Implement programs with extended hours to serve those families where parents are working multiple jobs or evening shifts.** Increase programs serving those areas of greatest need identified in the report, “Assessing Gang Activity in Montgomery County,” ensuring adequate transportation for students to after-school and summer programs. Provide support to assist families who cannot otherwise afford to pay for quality after-school programming.
- (2) **Develop activities that empower students to promote their own safety and resilience through gender-sensitive education activities and student leadership training.**
- (3) **Increase programs related to acclimation and acculturation for students and their families.** Initiate reunification groups and programs for youth and families to help renew family bonds and help families adjust to life in this country.
- (4) **Provide additional funding for existing school- and community-based mentoring programs. Implement a countywide effort involving all sectors of the community to recruit additional mentors for youth and young adults.** There is a need for youth who are suspended or expelled from school or who have dropped out of school to have a mentoring experience in their lives as well.
- (5) **Expand funding and support for comprehensive community and school-based programs such as Linkages to Learning and the Youth Services Centers and Wellness Centers as well as others identified in the Community Resources Report.** These centers can provide safe places for youth who wish to avoid gang involvement. Giving parents the tools to strengthen their parenting skills, improve communication among family members and increase engagement in their youngsters’ lives will empower parents to assume a more active role in parenting.



- (6) **Review the County's existing Early Childhood Plan and provide funding and support for those components which directly enhance the County's gang prevention efforts.** The importance of intervening early and with very young children is critical in recognizing and addressing risk factors early on.
- (7) **Provide incentives to mental health professionals and agencies in order to increase services to bilingual populations. Provide support to immigrants and refugees who may require additional professional training to receive licensure to practice in this community.** Provide specialized training to mental health professionals in how to work with gang-involved and at-risk youth. Providing an array of integrated bilingual mental health services to youth and their families will begin to address the various issues faced by these families. Counseling is also critical for those families who have been reunited after many years.
- (8) **Provide funding and resources for youth job-training programs that target gang-involved youth and at-risk youth.** Examine current alternative school programs (e.g., vocational training) policies and potential barriers to participation. Identify ways to create flexibility within the existing curriculum to encourage improved school performance and to discourage dropping out.

## **E. PROTECT**

Data tell us that we are fortunate to live in a county with low overall crime rates and low incidents of violence and weapons in our schools. Yet data do not necessarily tell the whole story of whether a community is safe, or, just as importantly, whether residents and students feel safe in their neighborhoods and schools. Gang members prey on youth who lack a feeling of safety, falsely offering them protection through belonging to a gang.

- (1) **Increase the size of the County's Gang Investigations Unit to include centralized and decentralized components.** Expand as needed the resources of other agencies that may be impacted by this increase.
- (2) **Request that members of the criminal and juvenile justice systems (including State's Attorney, Correction and Rehabilitation, Public Defender and Juvenile Services) continue to find ways to improve and expand diversion and non-jail sentencing options for the courts to use in cases where offenders are gang members or are associated with gangs.**
- (3) **Explore and implement available options for including prohibitions against associating with other known gang members within conditions of probation and parole.**

- (4) **County government agencies and organizations should be encouraged to conduct comprehensive facility and program safety assessments to enhance perceptions of security.** Youth often cite fear as one of their motivations for becoming part of a gang. Maintaining safe environments in the community and in schools would help to reduce gang involvement. The National School Safety Center suggests factors that should be examined to determine the degree of safety in these settings.
- (5) **Implement evidence-based strategies to discourage bullying in schools and communities and provide comprehensive anti-bullying programming at all school levels.**
- (6) **Create Regional or Community-Based Youth Violence Prevention/ Intervention Teams made up of direct service workers and street mentors from public and private agencies and organizations to coordinate the services and resources provided to gang-involved youth and their families.** These teams will identify the most heavily gang-involved youth and their families to receive intensive case management services that specifically address gang involvement.
- (7) **Identify gang-involved youth who need refuge and protection while they are attempting to leave a gang and provide them with safe-havens. Identify the existing organizational capacity across the continuum for providing these safe-haven resources and provide additional support and funding if necessary.** Ensuring the safety of youth is critical in two areas: (1) gang-involved youth who need refuge and protection while they attempt to leave the gang; and (2) youth who need a nonthreatening environment that allows them to come to a place with no organized activities and just be themselves.

## **APPENDIX**

The Montgomery County Prevention Gang Task Force worked in tandem with the Prince George's County Gang Prevention Task Force to develop recommendations for consideration by the Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force Steering Committee.

Pages 12 to 19 present the Executive Summary Report prepared by the Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force. The full report provides the reader an overview of the consensus recommendations developed by the Montgomery County and Prince George's Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force.

The Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force Final Report and Recommendations were presented and approved for implementation by County Executives Douglas M. Duncan and Jack B. Johnson on September 20, 2004.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



### FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*Submitted to*

**County Executive Douglas M. Duncan**  
*Montgomery County*

**County Executive Jack B. Johnson**  
*Prince George's County*

*By the*

### **JOINT COUNTY GANG PREVENTION TASK FORCE** **Montgomery County and Prince George's County, Maryland**

*September 14, 2004*

#### **I. NEED FOR ACTION**

In recent months, law enforcement officials have seen a steady increase of violent, well-organized gangs across the Washington area. Recruitment of gang members is actively taking place throughout the Washington metropolitan region. The issue of community gang activity is a major concern in school communities and in immigrant neighborhoods. Local incidents of gang activity have been reported in the media in conjunction with regional, national and international occurrences.

Law enforcement research shows that there are approximately 3,600 gang members in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia and that there are nine major active gangs and more than 100 additional crews, significant gangs and cliques region wide. According to Montgomery County and Prince George's County police departments and both State's Attorney's Offices:

- The mobility of gangs and gang members creates an insurmountable obstacle in attempting to compile a hard count of the number of gangs and/or gang members in the region. Many neighborhood crews or gangs form and disband on a frequent basis. In addition, gangs that are encountered and documented in one jurisdiction may also be encountered and documented in another jurisdiction. Multiple police contacts usually result in duplicate entries.
- Between 2000 and 2004, Montgomery County police officers logged over 2,400 contacts with gang members and associates. Each data entry represents an individual gang member or associate. This total figure also includes individuals who have never lived and/or no longer live in Montgomery County.
- One of the things that this Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force has accomplished is to give the most accurate picture of the numbers of gangs and gang members operating in the region. In Montgomery County, 70 different gangs have been identified at one time or another over the last five years. Over that time period 2,400 names were entered into a police database. As we have been able to refine the data, we currently estimate that there are 20 to 22 active gangs with approximately 540 to 560 active members and associates. While new gangs may periodically come and go, the 20 to 22 gangs have engaged in and continue to participate in some level of sustained criminal activity in Montgomery County.
- Gang activity has been documented in all of the Montgomery County police districts. The majority of documented gang activity occurs in specific areas of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> police districts.
- In Prince George's County, police officials estimate there are 50 "crews" or gangs in the County, with a total of over 400 members.
- Officials in Prince George's County note an alarming rise in Hispanic gangs and report that the criminal activity of these gangs has expanded to sophisticated car theft rings and prostitution.
- The majority of gang-related incidents occur in Prince George's County Police District 1, in a 1.4 square mile area in Langley Park.

## **II. THE JOINT COUNTY TASK FORCE**

In February 2004, faced with a rise in gang activity in both counties and in surrounding jurisdictions, Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan and Prince George's County Executive Jack B. Johnson established a Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force (Joint County Task Force) to facilitate the coordination of efforts related to the reduction and elimination of gang activity and gang violence.

Prior to the appointment of the Joint County Task Force, multiple public and private County institutions were independently working to tackle the increasing incidences of gang activity with only minimal exchange of information among them. The Joint County Task Force was challenged to identify opportunities to engage in regional partnerships to reduce and eliminate gang activity and to connect the many independent efforts. The Joint County Task Force includes representatives of public and private organizations as well as faith-based agencies, racial/ethnic community groups and nonprofit grassroots organizations.

The two County Executives charged the Joint County Task Force with conducting the following tasks and recommending strategies that focus on prevention, intervention and suppression solutions:

- Assess the nature and scope of gang activity in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.
- Identify primary geographic areas and populations that require concentrated gang prevention efforts.
- Identify existing community resources available to respond to the problem of gang activity.
- Identify policies, programs and resources needed to implement gang prevention strategies in Montgomery County and Prince George's County.
- Identify opportunities for coordinated intercounty and interdepartmental planning to implement gang prevention strategies.
- Identify key public-private and community partnerships essential for implementation of gang prevention initiatives in schools and communities.
- Conduct municipal/community town hall meetings to obtain input from community residents.
- Recommend cultural and linguistic competency levels needed to implement gang prevention strategies responsive to at-risk youth and their families.
- Prepare and submit an accountability structure for periodic review of recommendations submitted by the Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force.

Outcomes expected from the Joint County Task Force include concrete plans to increase the safety and well-being of youth and families in critically affected areas of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; increased awareness and capacity of

families and communities to respond to factors that contribute to gang activity; and reduction of gang recruitment, gang participation and gang violence in local communities.

To oversee this extensive collaborative research and planning effort, the two County Executives appointed four leaders from both jurisdictions to serve as the Co-Chairs of the Task Force: Prince George's County Police Chief, Melvin High; Montgomery County Police Chief, Tom Manger; Prince George's County Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Human Services, James Dula; and Montgomery County Health and Human Services Director, Carolyn Colvin.

Each county convened and managed its own individual task force. The Joint County Task Force met regularly to monitor the direction and progress of those efforts, review the final subcommittee reports and develop the framework and final report and recommendations for approval by the full membership of the Joint County Task Force.

Based on an array of research findings supporting this direction, the Joint County Task Force established three subcommittees: Prevention, Intervention and Suppression. These groups met regularly during the past seven months to review and analyze research and data, solicit community input and formulate recommendations in each respective area.

A key part of the information-gathering process was a series of municipal and town hall meetings held to solicit input from community members who have experienced firsthand the problems of gang activity. Individuals testifying at these public forums included parents, youth, community leaders, educators and current and former gang members.

Both counties also established a Web site devoted to publicizing the activities of the Joint County Task Force and provided an e-mail address so that residents from both counties could contact the Task Force with suggestions, concerns and comments.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The subcommittees relied upon national models and research literature to frame their discussions and develop their recommendations, focusing in particular on the 2002 *Comprehensive Gang Model* from the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. As critical to the formulations of the recommendations, however, was the feedback and input the subcommittees received from the six town hall meetings.

This report is the result of a collaborative effort by both counties, and contains joint recommendations as directed by the two County Executives. Each county will issue its own Gang Prevention Task Force Report that provides information and resources specific to its region. The recommendations from the Joint County Task Force follow.

These recommendations reflect the comprehensive approach of prevention, intervention and suppression strategies and are grouped in those categories. It must be noted, however, that all the subcommittees' recommendations interrelate. Some recommendations will be implemented jointly; that is, both counties will contribute staff and/or resources. Other recommendations are similar in intent and content but will be implemented by each county according to the demographics and specific needs, requirements and resources of the county.

## **Guiding Principles**

Any comprehensive collaborative effort should be grounded in a set of guiding principles. Consequently the Joint County Task Force has endorsed the following to underscore every recommendation:

- By addressing risk factors for gang involvement, a community can also address other issues faced by youth, young adults and their families such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, truancy and drop-out rates, unemployment, bullying and mental health problems.
- All programs that address prevention, suppression, and intervention, whether existing or new to the community, must be culturally sensitive and must reflect the diversity of the community in which they operate.
- All new programs that address prevention, intervention, and suppression must be evidence-based with measurable outcomes, and must have evaluation programs built in to monitor their effectiveness.

## **General Recommendations**

- (1) Establish a Joint County Gang Prevention Steering Committee that meets quarterly to continue the collaborative efforts and to monitor the progress of these recommendations. Members recommended to serve on the Committee include county representatives from the Police Departments, the Departments of Health and Human Services, Public Schools, State's Attorney's Offices, youth members and other agencies as appropriate.
- (2) Establish a coordinating entity for each county that is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the efforts of all public and private agencies involved in the areas of youth violence.
- (3) Work with local, state and federal legislators to design and develop joint agendas



for the 2005 Congressional and General Assembly sessions that include legislation aimed at gang prevention, intervention and suppression actions as well as the identification of funding opportunities.

- (4) Develop an inventory of gang prevention materials and other program resources.
- (5) Develop a public awareness campaign designed to educate area residents, elected officials, educators, nonprofit and faith-based organizations and businesses about gangs, including risk factors and recruiting. Ensure that such a campaign is culturally sensitive and multilingual and takes into account the need for visual as well as written materials. Solicit support for this effort from the business community.
- (6) Develop a partnership with the University of Maryland/Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice to assist with research and program development and evaluation efforts.

### **Prevention Recommendations**

- (1) Conduct a school safety assessment in Prince George's County and Montgomery County using the approach developed by the National School Safety Center. This type of assessment can be expanded to address safety issues in other public facilities as needed.
- (2) Implement and sustain after-school programs during the critical hours of 2 - 6 p.m. These programs must demonstrate through evaluation and analysis their effectiveness for the age, gender and ethnicity of program participants. Strengthen partnerships with private nonprofit agencies that provide resources and/or program space. Continued analysis should be undertaken to determine whether program hours are needed to serve youth whose parents may be working multiple jobs or during evening/nighttime hours.
- (3) Develop and implement a series of community meetings that reach out to youth, adults and parents and involve them in open, ongoing discussions about youth violence including gang involvement. Conduct surveys of youth attitudes about gang activities to gain their input regarding program development.

### **Intervention Recommendations**

- (1) Develop a standardized information collection and data-management system to

ensure that all public agencies in both counties collect and share the same data. This information is important for the purposes of policy, program and resource allocations.

- (2) Design and implement a joint county program in the greater Takoma/Langley Park area to address the needs of youth and young adults at risk of gang involvement. Draw upon the experience of the Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board, Prince George's County Workforce Services Corporation, and the business, nonprofit, civic and faith communities of the target area as appropriate.
- (3) Establish an anonymous tip line in each county for the reporting of suspected gang activity, graffiti or tagging and other occurrences of suspicious activity.
- (4) Actively participate with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to develop a regional strategy to address gang activity while maintaining the Prince George's and Montgomery County initiatives.
- (5) Provide assistance to municipalities, civic associations, unincorporated areas and community-based organizations to help them establish grassroots community programs such as mentoring and coaching that focus on youth at risk.
- (6) Create a range of appropriate safe haven resources where children and youth at risk of gang involvement can seek refuge from a threatening environment.
- (7) Expand and increase awareness of remedial education programs, technical education programs, employment training and entry level employment opportunities focused on areas with a high concentration of at-risk and gang-involved youth. Work with appropriate agencies (e.g., Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board, Prince George's County Workforce Services Corporation and local business associations) to develop additional vocational opportunities.

### **Suppression Recommendations:**

- (1) Request the Boards of Education to review existing dress code policies to ensure that principals and school personnel can prohibit gang paraphernalia, suppress gang members' visibility and increase students' feelings of safety.
- (2) Expand the number of in-school police officers (Educational Facility Officers and School Resource Officers), extending the program into all high schools and middle schools.

- (3) Create, expand and sustain in-school suspension programs and/or develop programs designed to keep suspended students in a facility, if not a school. These programs should provide opportunities for academic assistance and social development.
- (4) Evaluate the effectiveness of the truancy process and enhance if necessary.